REGIONAL ARTS COMMISSION OF ST. LOUIS

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Regional Arts Commission
Governance Committee Minutes
May 14, 2026 via ZOOM
9:00 a.m.

Call to Order & Committee Members in Attendance
Chair Purnell called the May 14, 2026, Governance Committee meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and asked Lea to conduct the Committee roll call. Members in attendance: Andréa Purnell, chair, Vin Ko, Anita Hagerman.

Members in Attendance
Yea – Purnell, Hagerman, Ko
Nay – none
Abstain – none

Members Absent
Beverly Isom
Tino Ochoa, ex-officio

Staff Attendees
Vanessa Cooksey, Lea Sutherlin

Approval of February 5, 2026 Minutes
Purnell called for motion to approve the minutes from the February 5, 2026, Governance Committee meeting.

Motion made by Hagerman, seconded by Ko, and unanimously carried to approve the February 5, 2026 Governance Committee minutes. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Purnell, Hagerman, Ko
Nay – none
Abstain – none

Purnell then called for the following reports:

Review Current Board Terms:
Purnell noted that the summary list of board terms was also included in the packet for this meeting, and asked Cooksey to comment.

Cooksey reported the following: (1) paperwork has been submitted to the STL City Boards & Commissions to request reappointments for Tino Ochoa and Beverly Isom [both terms end May 2026], and that office has acknowledged receipt of the request; (2) other City appointment for review is John Russell, Board treasurer,

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whose term ends January 2027 – and the importance for his replacement to have ability/expertise to add to RAC's financial stewardship; and (4) some county terms will also end in 2027 – need to ensure the right commissioners are in place at the right time.

Purnell shared the following: (1) the possibility of considering internal talent for a leadership position, particularly in relation to John Russell's role and the 2027 transition; (2) suggested that this topic could be addressed at the upcoming board retreat and emphasized the need for careful consideration of potential candidates; and (3) the final appointment depends on City of STL Mayor and office of Boards and Commissions.

Hagerman noted that she sent in a potential candidate's name for Board consideration.

Topics for Board + Staff Retreat, June 26, 2026

Purnell reminded that RAC's Annual Board + Staff retreat is scheduled for June 26, and asked Cooksey to give context on how the Grants and Programs Committee will help inform the retreat.

Cooksey shared that following a town hall in December 2025, the Grants Team (1) announced that no new grant applications would be accepted in 2026, and would instead focus on planning for 2027-2030, aligned with RAC's new strategic roadmap; (2) 2026 planning for a series of stakeholder meetings, including 70 of the 137 organizations that received grants in 2025, to understand their current needs and the broader ecosystem; (3) launched a data profile to analyze the arts sector's status; and (4) scheduled a special Grants & Programs Committee meeting for May 22, 2026, to be facilitated by Sue Greenberg to [a] share research on local arts agencies' challenges, impacts, and political threats, [b] session aims to help the grants committee develop a distribution plan for 2027, especially important given recent scrutiny and audits, and [c] goal is to set a clear direction to present to the full board at the staff retreat for final approval of grantmaking strategies for 2027-2030.

Purnell thanked Cooksey for that context and reminded this committee that the packet for this meeting included draft agendas for both the May 22 Grants & Programs special session, and the June 26 Board + Staff Retreat.

Ko left the meeting @ 9:44a and emailed his proxy for adjournment to Sutherlin.

Discussion held regarding possible additional topics June 26th retreat included: (1) speakers and topics, including AI integration with the board retreat, aligned with prior discussions; (2) the need to allocate 45 minutes to an hour for discussions on board appointments, capacity, and workload in Q1, especially considering the 2026 chair's extensive involvement; (3) consideration of a co-chair model noting that the statute is silent on co-chairs but that elevating the vice chair role could be beneficial due to increased responsibilities; (4) leadership and succession planning; (5) ongoing involvement in government relations and public policy; (6) media and crisis communications; (7) community engagement and external relationships; (8) legislative and policy environment – the importance of public opinion and community support was highlighted as part of the strategy; and (7) internal governance and bylaws.

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Purnell acknowledged the importance of balancing transparent communication with legal considerations and expressed appreciation for Cooksey's leadership.

Roll Call & Adjournment

Purnell called for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Hagerman seconded by Ko and unanimously approved to adjourn the May 14, 2026 Governance Committee meeting at 10:58 a.m. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Purnell, Hagerman, Ko (proxy)
Nay – none
Abstain – none

Submitted by
L. Sutherlin, Exec. Asst. & Commission Administrator

Attachments

- Governance Committee Minutes, February 5, 2026
- Board Term Summary
- Draft Grants & Programs Agenda, May 22, 2026
- Draft Retreat Agenda, June 26, 2026